

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED · 1881

EDITED BY CHAPMAN COHEN · · · EDITOR 1881-1915 · G. W. FOOTE

Registered at the General Post Office as a Newspaper.

VOL. XXXIX.—No. 24

SUNDAY, JUNE 15, 1919

PRICE TWOPENCE

PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page.
<i>Religion and To-day.—The Editor</i>	285
<i>Whit Sunday.—J. T. Lloyd</i>	286
<i>The Bagmen of Orthodoxy.—Mimnermus</i>	288
<i>The Trials and Tribulations of Animals.—T. F. Palmer</i>	288
<i>Bishops and Brains.—A Working-Man (S. C.)</i>	290
<i>The Religion of Abraham Lincoln</i>	290
<i>N. S. S. Conference—Executive's Annual Report</i>	294
<i>A Victorian Freethinker.—Geo. Underwood</i>	295
<i>The Fortune-Tellers.—Ignotus</i>	296
<i>A Story and a Moral.—G. E. Fussell</i>	297
<i>N. S. S. Conference—Public Meeting.—L.</i>	298
<i>Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums, etc.</i>	

Views and Opinions.

Religion and To-day.

In the history of every religion there is a time when, although it may make the angels weep, it can only make mortals laugh. Profound conviction, disinterested devotion to a set of ideas, will always command admiration even in those who attack them as untrue and harmful. We respect the man while we attack his opinions. Intellectual sincerity must always demand a measure of respect. We look back upon the uncompromising bigotry of earlier generations, and recoil from the persecution, the gloom, the sacrifice of much that was brightest in life. But when we look round at the shilly-shallying, weak-kneed clergy of our own day, and see them temporizing, apologizing, "holding the candle to the Devil" inside and outside the Churches, when we see their professed liberalism and surreptitious intolerance, their pretended acceptance of the results of Biblical criticism, and their endeavours to keep in the schools the very teaching they repudiate in apologetic writings, when we note the hundred-and-one ways in which they try to run with the hares and keep in with the hounds, then we say give us the honest bigots of an earlier generation in preference to the compromising incompetents of to-day.

How Religion Lives.

Intellectual strength and honesty are no longer compatible with a profession of faith in Christianity. Two or three centuries ago a man could enter the Church without conscious dissimulation or the sacrifice of his self-respect. The world was then small and simple, science was in its infancy, and religion seemed so important a fact that men felt no compunction in making it their life's business. To-day all is changed. The entire cosmical basis of Christianity has been destroyed. Astronomy has destroyed the small centrally-placed earth, the solid sky, the localizable heaven. Evolution has killed special creation. Anthropology has shown us the origin of religious ideas, and a study of primitive sociology has made clear the conditions of their development. Christianity is left without support in fact or justification in theory. It has almost ceased to appeal to conviction; it relies upon the play of lower motives. To one class it appeals as a means of

preserving threatened vested interests, to another, as a way of relieving miseries it has had no small influence in producing, and to yet another, as a profession which holds out to mediocrity the promise of a successful career. When John Russel Lowell was in England, he expressed surprise that a certain merchant, who held heretical views, should attend church. "Well," said the man, "I attend church because it is established, get your thing established and I'll attend that." Hazlitt said that if the average Englishman was asked why he went to church, he would tell you, in confidence, that he went because his wife took him. If all were equally candid many less creditable reasons than this would be given.

Aids to Faith.

In a modern society religious organizations are kept in being by considerations that are not in any genuine sense religious. How many parents are there who regard a profession of religion as necessary to their children's advancement in life? How many shopkeepers treat a profession of religion as indispensable to building up a good connection? The early Christians may have believed in Jesus because of the prophets that went before him. Many of the modern ones certainly believe because of the *profits* that come after him. We are often told that we ought to run our business on Christian lines. It is quite certain that a great deal of our Christianity is run on business lines. We preach self-sacrifice, and pile up our dividends; we profess our faith in the power of brotherly love, and clamour for the largest Navy on earth; we claim the earth for the Lord, but reserve to ourselves a "mandate" for its administration. If we were to take away from Christianity all that it gains from these and other artificial aids to faith, and leave it to depend upon pure conviction, how long would it endure? Only so long as the inertia of the people permitted it to exist. As it is, people take Christianity because they find it ready to hand, because they find it profitable, and because they are not sufficiently in love with truth to face discomfort and annoyance in obtaining it. The possession of truth is a bribe that counts only with the few; ease and comfort is the consideration that weighs with the many.

Truth and Error.

We are accustomed to soothe our minds with a number of fine-sounding maxims concerning the power of truth and the weakness of error. Yet if we look soberly and seriously at life, we find that error often proves itself stronger than truth. Love of truth is not the most powerful of motives with ordinary human nature. Truth may be essential to all, but most seem content to rub along with a wonderfully small amount. Nor is it safe to say, let truth and error grapple, in the assurance that truth is bound to come out uppermost. Truth is often too heavily handicapped for this to be true. A new truth enters the arena alone, and meets error armed with all the weight of tradition, with all the wealth of threatened interests to purchase support, and with all the *prestige* of social position to silence dissent.

Truth may be unconquerable in the end, but history is full of examples of error triumphing over truth, of illusion triumphing over reality. Under normal circumstances, it is the new-born truth fighting a two-thousand-year lie; poverty fighting wealth; the timid present fighting the truculent past. Truth can conquer only through the determination of men and women that it shall conquer. And we can best secure this result by seeing that speaking ceases to be an expensive luxury and becomes possible with all.

* * *

Some Artificial Props.

Prominent among the artificial supports of Christianity stands the existence of a large army of professional advocates. Theoretically, the clergy exist for the benefit of religion; practically, in modern society, religion exists for the benefit of the clergy. There may be many among the clergy who honestly think their religion to be both truthful and useful—we believe there are; but one may rest assured that when the advocacy of a particular teaching becomes a recognized profession, and withal a lucrative one, it will not lack advocates. It becomes an established method of getting a living, and its advocates are less concerned with the truth of their teaching than they are with the maintenance of their position. Not that one has any right to object to the clergy living by their teaching, provided the salary is paid by the proper people. If certain folk want the clergy to lecture them on a subject of which neither of them know anything, they are morally bound to maintain them. Charles II. has not been credited with a superabundance of wisdom, but there is a reputed saying of his that belies his detractors. He explained a popular preacher's success by saying that "his nonsense suited their nonsense." And if people want a parson to talk nonsense to them, let them pay him by all means. It is a poor game, but that is their concern more than ours.

* * *

A Plain Issue.

But the clergy are not content to urge their claims, or put forward their teachings in a legitimate manner. They bribe the poor with charities, which are really so many advertisements for their particular "doxy." They enlist the aid of the wealthy by a promise to keep the people in order. They use the power of the State when they can to suppress their antagonists. They deliberately breed clients by forcing upon the unresisting mind of childhood doctrines which they dare not place, without serious qualifications, before adults. It is considerations such as these which make it next to impossible for one to treat religion with respect nowadays. Always parasitic by nature, in earlier generations it at least fitted in with the knowledge and feeling of the day. To-day this is no longer the case. It maintains an artificial life by more or less illegitimate methods. Let those who talk so glibly about the value of religion, its indestructibility, and the craving of human nature for it, remove from religion all its artificial props, those social reserves that are always brought up to induce obedience when it cannot command conviction; let it appeal to an educated human reason, as religion; and in a few generations it would be looked upon by educated men and women in the same spirit that they now look upon the dead gods of the uncivilized past.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Actions.

Brave actions are the bread of life
And words the ornaments of love and strife,
Our thoughts that now seem only dreams of truth
Will show their worth at waking.

MARY LESTER.

Whit-Sunday.

THE utter unhistoricity of the Book of the Acts is self-evident. It records a greater number of miracles than any other New Testament document. Vision and revelations are vouchsafed to the Apostles almost daily; and whenever they speak they are said to be filled with the Holy Ghost. When cast into prison either angels or earthquakes intervene to set them free. Those who oppose them are supernaturally punished: they fall dead or are smitten with blindness. Besides, while the book thus teems with miraculous incidents, reported nowhere else, its history of the period covered is a shocking falsification of the facts. It entirely ignores the existence of two radically different Gospels in the primitive Church, and it seriously minifies the bitterness of the conflict between the Pauline and Apostolic parties. Even so orthodox a divine as Professor Bacon, of Yale University, admits that—

Acts reverses Paul's point of view, making his career in the period of unobstructed evangelization one of labour for Jews alone, in complete dependence on the Twelve. It practically excludes the period of opposition by a determination of the Gentile status in an "Apostolic Council." Paul is represented as simply acquiescing in this decision. As described by Paul, the whole earlier period of fifteen years had been occupied by missionary effort for *Gentiles*, first at Damascus, afterwards "in the regions of Syria and Cilicia." It was interrupted only by a journey to Arabia, and later, three years after his conversion, by a two weeks' private visit to Peter in Jerusalem..... As described by Luke the whole period was spent in the evangelization of Greek-speaking *Jews*, principally at Jerusalem (*The Making of the New Testament*, pp. 57-8).

The truth is that Acts and the Pauline Epistles flatly contradict one another on almost every point. The former makes Paul accept solutions which the latter emphatically repudiate. Now, such being the historical unreliability of this Book, it follows that we cannot accept its account of the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, contained in the second chapter, as accurate. The Gospel story is that on Good Friday Jesus was crucified; that on Easter Sunday he rose triumphant from the dead; that forty days later he disappeared finally—ascended to heaven; and that on the day of Pentecost—the first Whit Sunday—the ministry of the Holy Ghost was inaugurated. For ten whole days the disciples were bereaved indeed, and the earth was in deep mourning. Why was there so long an interval between the departure of the Saviour and the advent of the Sanctifier? And why was Pentecost chosen as a fitting date for the initiation of a new dispensation? In other words, why was there a period of ten days during which the world contained no Divine Being, and was under no Divine dispensation? The old divines used to teach that it had been decreed from eternity that each person in the Holy Trinity should preside over human affairs for a prescribed length of time, instituting and enforcing his own system of administration or dispensation. First came the dispensation of the Father which lasted from the Fall until the Incarnation. Then followed the dispensation of the Son, which was only some thirty-three years long, ending with the ascension. The third dispensation is that of the Holy Spirit, under which we are said to enjoy the privilege of living; but, strangely enough, between the close of the second dispensation and the commencement of the third, ten dark dismal days intervened. Why did not the Spirit come the moment the Son left? Why was there an interregnum at all? Scores of times have

these questions been asked, but no satisfactory answers have ever been given.

The truth is, however, that these so-called Divine dispensations are simply theological inventions founded on no fact whatever. Surely, no Old Testament student would dream of pronouncing the dispensation of the Father a success. Even the very idea of it is atrociously immoral as well as laughably absurd. Fancy the Creator of the human race selecting a small Semitic tribe and treating it as a pampered favourite, saying to it: "Thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God, and the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all peoples that are upon the face of the earth" (Deut. xiv. 1, 2). The essential injustice of the selection and the treatment no one can deny; but the perplexing fact is that the result was from every point of view a total failure. This is frankly admitted by the Father himself. In Hosea xi. 1-9 he is represented as lamenting so heart-breaking a fact. "When Israel was a child," he says, "then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt. As they called them, so they went from them: they sacrificed unto the Baalim, and burned incense to graven images. Yet I taught Ephraim to go; I took them on my arms; but they knew not that I healed them. I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love; and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat before them." Both as Father and schoolmaster, Jehovah was anything but a success. Of course it was the people's fault, not his, and it grieved him at his heart to think of their obstinate ingratitude. He is represented as saying:—

How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is burned within me, my compassions are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim; for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee.

Thus the Father's dispensation was a woeful disappointment to all concerned. His peculiar people, the children of his heart, his specially favoured pupils, rebelled against him, and, in spite of all his care for and devotion to them, became a "sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers," children that dealt corruptly, who forsook the Lord and despised the Holy One of Israel, with the result that he was ultimately obliged to reject and disown them.

It must be borne in mind, however, that the final rejection of Israel did not take place until a second dispensation, that of the Son, had ended in disaster, so far as the Divinely chosen race was concerned. We are told that the Son came in "the fulness of time." It was unto his own that he came, but "they that were his own received him not." Both him and his dispensation they deliberately cast out, and their punishment was that they themselves were ruthlessly rejected. Paul's attempted justification of this casting off of the Jews is the most remarkable piece of reasoning on record. Addressing an imaginary fault-finder, he says:—

O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why didst thou make me thus? Or hath not the potter a right over the clay, from the same lump to make one part a vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long suffering vessels of wrath fitted unto destruction; and that he might make known the riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy, which he afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom he also called, not from the Jews only, but also from the Gentiles (Rom. ix. 20-25)?

Now, when the day of Pentecost was fully come, there were only about a hundred and twenty Jews who owned

allegiance to the Son, whose personal dispensation was already at an end, having proved, so far as its original intention was concerned, a complete fiasco. The divines assure us, it is true, that neither the dispensation of the Father, nor that of the Son, was in any true sense a failure, but that both were merely of a preparatory character, and find their perfect justification in the dispensation of the Spirit, under which there is, theoretically, no distinction made between Jew and Gentile.

Such is the gist of our Christian mythology, and no unprejudiced person can fail to see that it cannot legitimately claim any superiority over Pagan mythology. Surely the second chapter in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles is founded upon pure legend, and presents not a single historical fact. Multitudes of twentieth century Christians do not believe in the miraculous storm of wind or in the appearance of tongues parting asunder, like as of fire, and sitting upon each one present. Neither do they believe that, filled with the Holy Wind, the hundred and twenty people all "began to speak with other tongues, as the Wind gave them utterance." But, curiously enough, while repudiating the miraculous character of the occurrences on this first Whit-Sunday, most of them accept the story of the Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus as literal facts, and Peter's speech appeals to them as beautifully true. As a matter of fact, Peter's long discourse is quite as incredible as anything else said to have happened on that notorious day. Whoever the author of Acts may have been, he was certainly a Gentile Christian, for no Jew could have put such a sermon into Peter's mouth. It will be observed that it is practically identical with the sermon attributed to Paul in chapter xiii. The argument and the quotations in both are the same, but the argument is fallacious and the quotations from Psalm xvi. are inaccurate. Now, Peter was a Jew addressing a Jewish audience, and he is represented as being filled with the Holy Spirit; but he quotes not from the original Hebrew, but from the Septuagint, which seriously departs from the Psalm's teaching. The amazing fact is that all quotations from the Old Testament in Luke's Gospel and in Acts are from the Septuagint version; and our inevitable conclusion is that the speech ascribed to Peter on the Day of Pentecost was not his composition at all, but wholly that of the author of Acts, who wrote from fifty to sixty years after the supposed event.

On the whole, then, there is no logical and ethical escape from the exegetical inference that the story of the first Whit-Sunday is a pure myth. No Holy Ghost descended, and so far as the testimony of history goes, there is no evidence that the Holy Ghost exists. Man-kind has had to fight its own battles, unassisted by any outside power, in all ages, and whatever progress it has ever made has been achieved by means of its own resources alone.

J. T. LLOYD.

Buonarroti's "Dawn."

SPIRIT of twilight chill and upper air
 Stretched desolate upon the rack of morn;
 Thou hooded grief from mountain marble torn,
 Gazing sad-lidded on the sky's despair,
 While the grey stars, like tears, descend forlorn;
 Earth's broken heart and man's unsleeping care
 Wait on thy pillow, crying to be bourne—
 The only burden thou shalt ever bear.
 No infant hope may dream on thy deep breast,
 No little lip may soothe with infant might
 Thy mouth's immortal woe; for thee, oppressed,
 Dawn dim epiphanies beyond all light,
 Where man's long agony and cry for rest
 But torture dayspring into darker night.

EDEN PHILLPOTTS.

The Bagmen of Orthodoxy.

Exeter Hall holds us in mortal submission to missionaries, who (Livingstone always excepted) are perfect nuisances, and leave every place worse than they found it.—*Charles Dickens.*

A CERTAIN liveliness is being shown in religious circles concerning the question of the reinstatement in the Lord's vineyard of the German missionaries. The yellowest of the yellow journals is dead against the proposition, and suggests wickedly that Teutonic missionaries have been actuated by other motives than purely religious ones. According to this high authority, which a short time since regarded all Germans as "Atheists," every Teutonic missionary who preaches Christ and Him Crucified is a stumbling-block and a rock of offence. These be brave words, and they raise the far more important question: Are missions doing the good they are credited with?

China, for example, is a corner of the Lord's vineyard which yields practically no crop, but consumes an amount of labour which might far more profitably be expended elsewhere. There are circumstances which take that enormous country out of the category of ordinary mission fields. It is only from the Western point of view that the Chinese can be called barbarians. They have a civilization which was old while as yet our forefathers were painted savages. They have native religions of their own, and, rightly or wrongly, they have an antipathy to foreign ideas. It is we who, in their eyes, are the barbarians, and, truth to tell, what with the quarrels and animosities of the many Christian sects who seek to make converts, and the divergence that so obviously exists between our precept and our practice, the spectacle offered by European civilization cannot be a very edifying one.

Left to herself, China would have none of us or of our Bible. We happen, however, to be the stronger Power; so we secure a measure of toleration for missionaries, which all classes of Chinese view with undisguised contempt. Perhaps we could better understand their attitude if the positions were reversed. That is to say, if the Chinese were able by naval and military force to extort terms for their almond-eyed and pig-tailed missionaries to preach Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism among ourselves. In some places the missionary is a civilizing agency, that is, he introduces Western social habits. That character he does not possess in China. He has nothing but Christianity to offer the people in various versions. They mostly conflict with each other, but they all run counter to the most cherished and ingrained beliefs of Chinese society. To the Chinaman the highest of all virtues is filial piety, and in his eyes some of the most familiar Biblical texts must appear shocking and immoral. We ought really to look at these matters from a Chinese point of view. It is not pleasant to think what fate might befall Chinese missionaries with their Oriental rites and doctrines if they were imposed by force upon the sturdy population of our Black Country.

What it costs to convert a Chinaman in blood and treasure we do not know, but it is very certain that missionary societies expend upon a hopelessly barren soil like China an amount of energy and money which might be used to far better purpose in uplifting socially men and women at home, who, destitute even of the morality of Confucius, stand in as much need of reclamation as the almond-eyed race.

Some time ago, it was calculated that the mission harvest, on the most favourable computation, amounted to the very modest figures of two Chinamen per missionary per year, and that even so, the quality of the converts was open to grave suspicion. The renegade heathen Chinese has a distressing habit of turning his

spiritual studies to material account, and is said to hang about mission stations, and even to succeed in being converted in turn by all the missionaries, Anglican, Roman, Free Church, in return for being provided with rice.

Unquestionably, the matter of missionaries will have to be duly considered, and as Jews are looked upon in Christian quarters with hardly less benevolent regard than is the Chinaman, we must be interested in seeing what public opinion determines. The missionary question with Jews, that is to say missions to them, has never been other than a comedy. Although large sums of money are spent yearly, it is not a danger to Judaism, and is never likely to be. There may be Jews who have become Christians from wholly conscientious motives, but few people have met such persons. Some of these converts become missionaries in turn. It is an easy method of earning money, if not an honest one.

When the body of the Jew was taken and burnt alive, in order to save his soul, those who perpetrated the cruelty were, at least, straightforward in their objects. They acted as other savages had acted to them, and as, we fear, many religious folk would act to-day to those who differ, though the former be not Chinamen and the latter remain Europeans. In the light of the twentieth century, the whole question of missionary enterprise should be reconsidered. The matter cannot be evaded much longer by men who may be called Christians, who may even have been ordained to the Christian ministry, but who certainly have never been converted to civilization.

MIMNERMUS.

The Trials and Tribulations of Animals.

III.

(Concluded from p. 279.)

In the year of grace 1519 there occurred a plague of moles in the Tyrol, and criminal proceedings were set in motion against these burrowing animals at Stelvio. As the moles were entitled to a hearing, and it was deemed unjust to condemn them without allowing them an opportunity to defend themselves, an advocate was briefed on their behalf. The services of moles to the art of agriculture were eloquently described to the court, and at the request of their counsel the judge granted them a safe conduct on their departure which protected them from the unwelcome attentions of their canine, feline, and other enemies. And not merely was this lenient treatment accorded the full-grown moles, but the clement judge permitted "a further respite of fourteen days to all such mice (moles) as were either too young or still in their infancy."

At Berne in 1478 certain insects ravaged the crops, and their trial proved a protracted one. These vermin were solemnly cited to present themselves in court at a stated hour, but they treated the summons with contempt. The ecclesiastical tribunal was naturally incensed at this scornful disregard of its authority, and their counsel finding little to urge in favour of his clients, they were duly exorcised. The Bishop of Lausanne charged and burdened the destructive and contumacious insects with the heavy curse of the Church. The insects were anathematized "in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost," and bidden to "turn away from all fields, grounds, enclosures, seeds, fruits, and produce, and depart." All this and much more was thundered against them, and the people were highly elated at the result of the trial. But, despite the bitter curses laid upon them, the insects continued their devastations and did not appear

one penny the worse. A sovereign remedy, however, was at hand. Driven to desperation, the people hastened to pay their tithes and then the trouble ceased.

In a trial of leeches at Lausanne in 1451 several of these blood-sucking animals were taken into court to listen to the charges preferred against the local leeches in general, and they were ordered to leave the district within three days. The leeches, however, ignored the order of the court and were promptly exorcised. The Heidelberg doctors of that period were so completely dominated by the orthodox power that they unanimously approved the act of exorcism, and imperiously silenced all those cavillers who hinted their doubts concerning its efficacy. But it was little more than a squabble about procedure, and that the end justified the means no sensible person could deny, for no sooner was the order issued than "the leeches began to die off day by day until they were utterly exterminated."

In our more enlightened times it is widely recognized that an unusually inclement winter plays sad havoc with the lives of insectivorous native birds, and that a plague of caterpillars occurs in the following season. The caterpillar pest is also common in districts where beneficent insect-eating birds are subjected to pitiless persecution. But in earlier and more ignorant days the useful activities of the avifauna were hardly dreamed of. The numerous plagues of caterpillars were almost universally attributed to the devices of Satan or his great adversary.

Legal proceedings against caterpillars were constantly in operation. In some instances judicial methods were reserved until all other recognized processes had ended in failure. In seventeenth century Italy, the vineyards having suffered severely for several seasons from insect devastation the customary religious remedies were applied. Holy water, sacred processions, and pious entreaties all proved unavailing, and then the noxious insects were arraigned for their misdeeds. These caterpillars were prosecuted in 1633, and the legal document decreeing the appearance of the larval insects in court, may still be read in the municipal archives of Strambino in Piedmont.

The Roman Church seems to have imported the criminal procedure of Catholic Europe into America, where the trials of animals survived until the opening of the eighteenth century. In one of these actions the Friars Minor of a Brazilian province instituted proceedings against the ants of the district, on the ground that these irreverent creatures tunneled beneath the foundations of the monastery and menaced the edifice with utter destruction. Nor was this all. For, not content with undermining the monastery, the ants invaded the store chamber and stole the Brethren's food.

In opening the case for the prosecution, the Friars' counsel compared the great virtue of the monks, who subsisted on the charity of the faithful, which they obtained at considerable personal inconvenience, with the thievish propensities of the ants, combined with their obvious intention to bring down the Friars' domicile about their ears. In the absence of good cause for such conduct being shown, the ants should suffer the sentence of death.

In response to this indictment, the ants' advocate contended that his industrious and intelligent clients were fully entitled to preserve the gift of life bestowed upon them by a wise Creator through the exercise of their natural instincts. Moreover, the ants served as a model to mankind, inasmuch as they displayed the noble virtues of prudence and piety. Again, argued this blunt lawyer, "the ants worked far harder than the monks, the burdens which they carried being often larger than their bodies, and their courage greater than their strength."

This brilliant defence led to further argument, and the prosecuting advocate was constrained to concede that his original attitude towards the ants had been somewhat shaken by their counsel's contentions. After a very grave deliberation, the judge decided that the Brethren should set aside a field in which the ants might dwell, and that these animals must migrate to their allotted habitation, or endure the pain of the major excommunication. This solution seemed fair and reasonable, and the judgment of the court was proclaimed aloud to the ants at the openings of their burrows by one of the monks. The sequel may or may not be accepted as strictly accurate, but it is alleged that the ants obeyed the order of the court with exemplary diligence, and "dense columns of them were seen leaving the ant-hills in all haste and marching in a straight line to the residence appointed for them."

In the middle of the fifteenth century, at Savigny, a sow and her litter of six were arrested for the murder of a child aged five. The sow was tried and pronounced guilty, and hanged, but the little ones were given the benefit of the doubt. But execution by hanging was sometimes regarded as a mild punishment for homicidal swine, and cases are on record where these animals were burned alive. Bulls and horses occasionally suffered the extreme penalty of the law for the crime of murder. Baring Gould mentions the case of a mare that was burnt alive at the instance of the Parliament of Aix, so recently as the year 1697.

And not mammals only, but birds, were the not infrequent victims of these judicial follies and crimes. In 1474, a farmyard cock was charged with the heinous offence of laying an egg. The appalling ignorance and credulity of the age stand revealed in all their naked deformity in this trial. The prosecution urged that cocks' eggs proved of priceless value in the preparation of magical substances. Sorcerers coveted the possession of cocks' eggs above that of the philosopher's stone. And to pile up the infamy the Devil, he said, engages witches to brood over these eggs and hatch monsters from them. For the supposed cock's egg was credited to contain the most baleful constituent of that diabolical concoction, witch's ointment. And "when hatched by a serpent or a toad, or by the heat of the sun, it brought forth a cockatrice, which would hide in the roof of the house and with its baneful breath and 'death-darting eye' destroy all the inmates."

Such conceptions, so utterly repugnant to the modern mind, were then regarded as self-evident truths. So saturated with superstition was public sentiment that the counsel for the defence hardly dared to doubt them. His only extenuating claim was that there was no evidence that the Evil One had any influence over the involuntary act of his client in depositing an egg, or that Satan ever entered into a conspiracy with dumb creatures. To this plea the public prosecutor rejoined, in the words of Frazer's summary, that although

the Devil did not make compacts with brutes, he sometimes entered into them, in confirmation of which he cited the celebrated case of the Gadarene swine, pointing out with great cogency that though these animals, being possessed by devils, were involuntary agents, like the prisoner at the bar when he laid an egg, nevertheless they were punished by being made to run violently down a steep place into the lake, where they perished. This striking precedent evidently made a deep impression on the court; at all events the cock was sentenced to death, not in the character of a cock, but in that of a sorcerer or devil which had assumed the form of a fowl, and he and the egg which he had laid were burned together at the stake with all the solemnity of a regular execution.

Bishops and Brains.

IN a recent issue of a weekly paper, Bishop Welldon attempts to chastise the "British working man" for his various shortcomings. The article is mainly a tirade against so-called Trade Union ethics. With that aspect of the matter the *Freethinker* is not concerned; but there are several other items in the article which merit attention in the *Freethinker*.

Like a good many other clerical utterances on Labour problems, Bishop Welldon commences his by an indulgence in a preliminary canter regarding his "genuine respect," "sympathy," etc., for the working man; thereby endeavouring to "soft soap" the Trade Union and Labour Movement. If this "soft-soaping" process continues long enough—and it will assuredly be attempted—the Labour Movement is pretty sure to get well greased and fleeced; and then—well, it will be a bad case of "good-bye-ee."

He follows up this preamble with his "recognitions" (how sweet this name will sound in a curate's ear!) by saying that "If there is one truth written upon my soul, it is this: 'An honest man's the noblest work of God.'" Had the Bishop been well up in the sciences of Anthropology, Comparative Religion, and a few others—not very deep, but just even a nodding acquaintance, so to speak, and also had he been more intellectually honest—he would know that Ingersoll's version, "An honest God's the noblest work of man," is far truer to the facts than the epigrammatic rubbish he quoted. But then, bishops take a long while to learn.

He then goes on to talk about fictitious "mistakes" regarding Labour's conception of manual and intellectual labour. This is not the place to discuss Labour Ethics; but one cannot help wondering where on earth the Bishop has been spending his time this last two or three score years? Maybe his spiritual devotions have absorbed all his time. Evidently someone has rudely shaken the bedrail, and disturbed his prayerful equanimity.

Next, the usual reference to the "poor clergy" appears. "There is to-day many a clergyman whose heart would be relieved of a dread anxiety if he could obtain the same salary as many a working man." Perhaps so. But the Bishop ought to remind them that by faith they should be able to move "mountains." Besides, what is the matter with prayer? No good? Or is heaven evacuated? Verily, the "word" of the Kaiser's "ally" is a mere scrap of paper.

The next item is one of those sloppy sentimental platitudes (which only the clergy know how to deliver) that make all decent men and women sick. "If I may speak of the mining population among which I live, I rejoice in the thought that they will receive higher wages, and enjoy better homes in the coming days." Great Jupiter! who said "Ecclesiastical Commissioners"? Does Bishop Welldon imagine that things come to the miners like manna from heaven?—in the same way, say, as his income and palatial residence? Pah. Mr. Smillie knows different, and so does the Bishop.

Then listen to this:—

I am deeply anxious that the working-class should enjoy reasonable hours of toil, and receive adequate wages for their toil. But not the less anxious am I that they should use their leisure and their money well, by cultivating habits of temperance and thrift. Economical problems demand a far more serious study than working-people sometimes give them."

Aye, and more serious still than Bishop Welldon gives them either. Does he think that his readers are as mentally opiated as some members of his congregations?

Evidently, *he* isn't of the "working people," but still he's "deeply anxious." Ugh! When working men and women *do* cultivate their leisure properly, there'll be no room nor need for bishops.

The last lap, however, "takes the biscuit." Fellow Freethinkers, just listen:—

Democracy is the rule to-day; it is, I believe, the will of God; for He has ordained passing of power in the course of the centuries from the one or the few to the many. But democracy, while it confers a privilege, imposes a responsibility upon the many; and it is my prayer that under the peace, which, when it is signed, will put an end not only to the terrible War of the last five years, but eventually, please God, to war itself, the civilized peoples of the world in their national and international relations may more and more constantly display the Christian spirit which alone is or can be the safeguard of peace and progress to humanity.

Fancy, it has taken God, God knows how long, to discover that "Democracy" is "His Will." Even then, to read between the lines, Bishop Welldon evidently considers that it was the last five years that proved the straw which broke His Back. And to show the crowning hypocrisy of his sentiments, the signing of the peace terms will only obviate further bloody calamities, *providing it "pleases God."* "Please God"—your grandmother; nothing but the energies of man rightly and intelligently directed will ever kill the social disease of war. Bishops, even with God's help, never will.

Such, however, is the imbecile stuff they desire to purvey to the Labour Movement. No doubt some of it will get swallowed. Fortunately, working-men and women *are* slowly removing the blinkers from their minds—very slowly, indeed; but when they *do* awake *en masse* God help the bishops.

A WORKING-MAN (S. C.).

The Religion of Abraham Lincoln.

MR. LINCOLN moved to this city (Springfield, Ill.) in 1837, and here he became acquainted with various men of his own way of thinking. At that time they called themselves Freethinkers, or Freethinking men. I remember all these distinctly, for I was with them, heard them, and was one of them. Mr. Lincoln here found other works—Hume, Gibbon, and others—and drank them in. He made no secret of his views, no concealment of his religion. When Mr. Lincoln was a candidate for our legislature, he was accused of being an Infidel, and of having said that Jesus Christ was an illegitimate child. He never denied his opinions, nor flinched from his religious views; he was a true man, and yet it may be truthfully said that in 1837 his religion was low, indeed. In his moments of gloom he would not doubt if he did not deny, sometimes God. He made me once erase the name of God from a speech I was about to make in 1834, and he did this in Washington to one of his friends. I cannot now name the man or the place he occupied in Washington; it will be known some time. I have the evidence, and intend to keep it.

Mr. Lincoln ran for Congress against the Rev. Peter Cartwright, in the year 1847 or 1848. In that contest he was accused of being an Infidel, if not an Atheist; he never denied the charge—would not—"would die first." In the first place because he knew it could and would be proved on him; and in the second place he was too true to his own soul to deny it. From what I know of Mr. Lincoln, and from what I have heard and verily believe, I can say: first, that he did not believe in a special creation, his idea being that all creation was an evolution under law; secondly, he did not believe in a special creation, his idea being that all creation was an evolution under law; secondly he did not believe that the Bible was a special revelation from God, as the Christian world contends; thirdly he did

not believe in miracles as understood by the Christian world; fourthly, he believed in universal inspiration and miracles under law; fifthly, he did not believe that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, as the Christian world contends; sixthly, he believed that all things, both matter and mind, governed by laws universal, absolute, and eternal. All his speeches and remarks in Washington conclusively prove this. Law was to Lincoln everything—and special interferences, shams, and delusions.

I do not remember ever seeing the words Jesus or Christ in print, as uttered by Mr. Lincoln. If he used these words they can be found. He uses the word God but seldom. I never heard him use the name of Christ or Jesus, but to confute that he was the Christ the only and truly begotten Son of God, as the Christian world understands it. The idea that Mr. Lincoln carried the New Testament or Bible in his bosom or his boots, to draw on his opponent in debate, is ridiculous. If Christianity cannot live without falsehood, the sooner it dies the better for mankind. Every great man that dies—Infidel, Pantheist, Theist, or Atheist—is instantly dragged into the folds of the Church, and transformed through falsehood into the great defender of the faith, unless his opinions are too well known to allow it. Is Christianity in dread or fear? What is the matter with it? Is it sick, and does it dread its doom? Would that it would shake itself free from its follies, and still live till all mankind outgrow it!—(V. H. Herndon, for twenty years Lincoln's law partner and intimate friend, in the *Toledo Index* (Ohio) for April 2, 1870. Cited in Lester F. Ward's *Glimpses of the Cosmos*, vol. i., pp. 63-5).

Acid Drops.

Patriotic poetry is not usually first-rate stuff; perhaps the cut-and-dried character of the sentiment forbids that it should be so. But when it is allied with religion, the result is nearly always deplorable. The latest illustration is furnished by Mr. Rudyard Kipling. Here it is:—

To Him Who made the Heavens abide and gave the stars their motion,

To Him Who tames the moonstruck tide twice a day round the ocean—

Let His Name be magnified in all poor folks' devotion!

Not for Prophecies and Powers, Visions, Gifts or Graces,

But the weighed and counted hours that drive us to our places

With the burden on our backs, the weather in our faces.

The whole is pure shoddy, but the second line defies expression. It sounds like an advertisement for a cheap tour.

The Lord's prayer contains the petition: "Give us this day our daily bread." This British Government bread subsidy, which allows bread to be within the reach of poor people, results in an annual loss of £47,000,000.

Sir Douglas Haig is a great soldier, and, as is natural, he thinks in terms of his profession. Speaking at the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, he said that he would like to see established a General Staff for the Christian Churches of the Empire. Why should he stop here? Why not institute confinement to vicarages, and field-punishments for refractory clergymen? These saintly men would welcome the "crucifixion" so long as tenpenny nails were not used.

Members of the Prophetic Society had a surfeit of sadness at Sion College, London, when they held their forty-seventh conference. According to these pious folk, everything is drifting to the Devil, and stupendous events are about to burst on a sleeping Church. Not even the brilliant sunshine of a perfect summer day could rouse these miserable sinners.

"I have slept in 50 degrees below zero without a tent," says the Bishop of Athabasca, Canada. And, he might have added, that he had consigned his opponents to 200 degrees Fahrenheit.

Bristol Education Committee has refused to reinstate a teacher who had been a conscientious objector. As the unfortunate teacher has already suffered imprisonment, this is uncommonly like punishing a man twice over for the same offence. Such extreme tenderness is only to be expected from Christian gentlemen who love their enemies.

The Archdeacon of Dorset is surprised that some labourers earn more than some parsons. He need not worry himself. The labourers in the Lord's vineyard know the possibilities of the alms-dish.

To commemorate the old boys and masters of St. Paul's Cathedral Choir and School who fell in the War, a fund of £2,000 is being raised. There will be no need to commemorate the clergy's own part in the Great War, for these heroic Christians were exempted from military service.

The pill of religion is heavily coated with sugar in these sceptical days. A Young Men's Christian Association advertisement requests "games of all kinds, gramophones, and records," and mentions the name of a kind-hearted princess who will receive the gifts. It is all so different to the Age of Faith, when the cry was "Believe or be damned."

In a law case at East London a detective named Pharaoh figured prominently. This Pharaoh was not a mummy.

The sober *Times Literary Supplement* tells a story of an army chaplain, who, having preached to the soldiers against bad language, had his exceeding reward in overhearing one of the congregation say with enthusiasm that he had given them "a bloody fine sermon."

At the inquest on an Ealing girl found drowned in the Thames, her mother attributed her violent temper to reading books. It would be difficult to find anything more violent than the "cursing Psalm" in the Holy Bible.

At All Saints' Church, South Acton, parishioners are invited to let the clergy know the subjects they would like them to preach about. A smart editor calls it "a new source of inspiration."

The following is worth reproducing:—The author quotes a story of his brother, Sheridan Le Fanu, who writes of an Irish farmer addressing his son as follows: "You see, my boy, a man's life naturally divides itself into three distinct periods. The first is that in which he is plannin' and con-thrivin' all sorts of villainy and rascality; that is the period of youth and innocence. The second is that in which he is puttin' into practise the villainy and rascality he contrived before: that is the prime of life or the flower of manhood. The third and last period is that in which he is makin' his soul and preparin' for another world; that is the period of dotage."—T. P. Le Fanu, "*Seventy Years of Irish Life*."

The Bible that warded off bullets has been well in evidence during the War, and an officer sends us from S. Africa the following. A young man came before the medical board and explained that he had been wounded but the bullet had been deflected by a copy of the New Testament he was carrying and had thus saved his life. A few questions disclosed the fact that he had been stooping forward, and his tunic being too large for him, and weighted with the book, the Testament had actually prevented the bullet passing through his tunic and had deflected it into his chest. Thus, instead of the book saving his life, it had actually been the cause of his wound. Quite a pretty story spoiled by an inquisitive officer. Still, we don't suppose that will stop the tale doing service in the mission room.

The Council of the Sunday Alliance is asking for £20,000 to fight the movement in favour of Sunday amusements and games. We have no doubt but that some will be found to subscribe, but fancy wasting £20,000 on such a purpose?

The *Daily News* notes that among the ridiculous "Honours List" just issued there occurs two for "temperance in South Africa." These are "Pte. Booze, Nat. Labour Corps, and Native Chaplain Dambuza, ditto." The chaplain is easily first.

To the poor and simple annals of clerical "starvation" may be added the name of the Rev. W. H. Hughes, of Oxford, who left estate of the value of £10,419.

London Free Churches are to establish a club for Orientals in Chinatown. Perhaps the Celestials will prefer to play fan-tan in their own lodgings.

Mrs. St. Clair Stobart declares that the Church "must be sympathetic to every form of spiritual and psychical revelation." The lady expects too much, for the Church will never welcome any but her own Jerusalem ghosts.

According to the *Evening News*, a service at St. Paul's Cathedral is an expensive luxury. The Dean has informed some school-cadets that the cost would be nearly £200, which would cover the expenses of choir, clergy, vergers, and other things. Maybe, the excellent revenue returns accounts for the large number of commemoration services at the Cathedral.

A number of Cambridge undergraduates sat up all one night recently to see if the ghost of a former University don would "revisit the glimpses of the moon." It is quite appropriate that these very young gentlemen should have been students of Christ's College.

In Mr. H. G. Wells's new novel, *The Undying Fire*, he clamours for a new system of education, and suggests "salvation by history." Unfortunately, some histories are almost worthless, such as that Mississippi of falsehood, the Bible.

The Dean of Manchester has confessed that in the days of his youth the stables had a great attraction for him. He has the consolation in his age of remembering that he worships a God who was born in one.

We miss the name of the Bishop of London in the list of guests at the Savage Club costume ball

A daily paper, commenting on a Scotch will case in which money was left for the conversion of "the heathen," suggests that a good definition of "the heathen" is a man "who in his blindness bows down to wood and stone." This describes a Roman Catholic perfectly.

"The Minimum Fashion in Paris" is the title of an article on dress in a contemporary. It would have been more amusing had it dealt with the minimum fashion in the Garden of Eden.

An ironic comment on our boasted education is the exceeding prevalence of minor superstitions, such as believing in the luck-bringing properties of charms and amulets. The Folk-Lore section of the Imperial War Museum amply proves that our educational methods are hopeless in this matter. Maybe that is one of the reasons why our fellow-countrymen so readily assent to the puerilities of religion.

Two miles long, a procession of 10,000 Roman Catholics in honour of Our Lady at Lourdes, was held recently near Westminster Cathedral. At Birmingham the alleged relics of Saint Chad, a seventh-century ecclesiastic, were carried in a procession from the Catholic Cathedral. These two items of news read uncommonly like a revival of religion—or superstition.

Describing the rescue of Hawker and Grieve, the airmen, one newspaper actually quoted the phrase: "The sea gave up its dead." It was hardly a sober remark.

The Bishop of London is always himself. When he is not silly, he is misleading—that is, when he is not both at the same time. But not often has he beaten the following. Speaking at a Church gathering on June 5, he said:—

If there had been one thing that the War must have branded on the mind of the most apathetic it was that the principles of the National Society were right, and had always been right. They could not have had a better example of what education without religion meant. The teachings of the Church had borne fruit during the War, for the men who had successfully withstood the moral temptations with which they had been assailed had been the religious men and boys.

The statement is characteristic of the man. Presumably, we are asked to believe that all the soldiers who had been religious men and boys stood firm, and that all the others gave way. If his remarks do not mean that, they mean nothing at all. It is not alone false, but the Bishop knows it is false; every officer and every soldier knows it is false. And even the Bishop cannot be silly enough to believe it to be true. There are limits even to his stupidity.

The poverty of the clergy is almost past belief. An awful example is the case of the late Canon Olivier, of Salisbury, who left the small amount of £26,954.

The Nonconformist *Daily News* had a leading article on *The Lowest Doctrine*. It related to politics, but the title might easily refer to the doctrine of eternal torment—which even the Churches are now ashamed of.

The Duke of Northumberland has been appointed President of the Sabbatarian Association with the high-sounding title of the Imperial Sunday Alliance. The Society is asking for a modest £20,000 to prevent anyone encroaching on the Sunday monopoly of the dear clergy. We wish them all the success they deserve.

Wesleyan Methodists are on the down-grade, in common with so many Christian bodies. This year there is a decrease of 29,564 Sunday scholars, and also of 3,635 members.

In thirty Metropolitan parks and open spaces, bands will perform on Sunday evenings during the coming summer. The harmoniums and choirs of the unco' guid will perform at countless street corners

Canon Barnes says it is not possible for a clergyman to live on an artisan's wages. The Canon should try living on the wages paid to a Freethought writer and speaker. He would be ready to "swop" with the artisan at once.

The yellowest of the yellow press asks derisively: "Who can now endure the music of the Boche?" It looks as if the *Messiah* were a back number in Fleet Street.

At a Hornsey inquest it was stated that the deceased was attended by a Christian scientist who read and prayed continuously day and night. The prayer treatment is not likely to become popular.

The clergy do not hide their light under a bushel. During the War a few Army chaplains were accidentally killed, and a memorial service has been arranged to take place in Westminster Abbey.

Mr. A. Clutton Brock has written a book with the alluring title: *What is the Kingdom of Heaven?* The question has been asked times past counting. Let us hope that the latest reply will not prove to be merely Brock's fireworks.

In a prize competition in a Sunday paper, concerning quotations which have influenced readers, the editor included among the writers "most frequently quoted": Thomas Paine's, "The world is my country. To do good is my religion."

A weekly paper devotes some space to "Big Fish Stories." It omits all reference to Jonah and the Whale, which is a record in its way.

To Correspondents.

SIGNA.—We are not in the least surprised. In August, 1914, we wrote in the *Freethinker* that we saw no ground for the belief that the defeat of Germany would kill militarism. We said: "The moral will be drawn again, as it has been drawn before, that it is every nation's duty to so arm that it will have nothing to fear from others, and can bring others to terms if it so desires. It is almost certain that the rebuilding of shattered navies and the replacement of depleted armies will receive first attention when the War is over." That might have been written as a summary of what has occurred instead of a forecast of what might happen. We do not think we are likely to yield to popular clamour. Our opposition is to militarism, and we dislike it more here than elsewhere.

C. T. SHAW.—Quite a good idea. Hope it will meet with success.

R. WILLMOT.—We read all manuscripts sent us—and return most.

T. Y.—When a man starts on the allegorical interpretation of the Bible, he is a hopeless case. For our part, we should give him a wide berth. Prophecy either finds a man silly or leaves him so.

EAST ANGLIAN.—We have your letter, with P.O. for 5s., but you do not say for what purpose the money is sent. Please let us know.

H. J. HASTINGS.—The publishers of Leduc's *Mechanism of Life* are Messrs. Rebman, 129 Shaftesbury Avenue, W.C. The pre-war price was 6s.

MRS. S. WELLS.—The Secretary of the Glasgow Society is Mr. F. Lonsdale, 256 Calder Street, Govanhill, who will be pleased to supply you with all the information you desire. The Branch does not hold meetings during the summer months.

O. NEWLAND.—It would, as you say, be a good thing to issue *Christianity and Slavery* and *Woman and Christianity* at a nominal price for propagandist purposes; but that would mean a heavy loss financially, and we are not in a position to face that. It is with a view to their services as propagandist instruments that we are keeping the price of the pamphlets we publish as low as possible.

J. BREESE.—Putting "Well worth reading" on the top of copies of this paper left for others is a good idea. We pass it on to those interested. We cannot answer your question. Pleased to have your hearty appreciation of our work.

J. M'QUAIN (Clontarf).—We are terribly overloaded with articles at present, but we are always ready to consider new ones. We cannot, of course, promise to publish before seeing.

W. J.—The gentleman in question received the paper, and noted the matter to which you refer. Will you please let us have the address of the newsagents to whom you refer and we will enquire into the matter.

The Secular Society, Limited, office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

The National Secular Society's office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, giving as long notice as possible.

Lecture Notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4, by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4, and not to the Editor.

All Cheques and Postal Orders should be crossed "London, City and Midland Bank, Clerkenwell Branch."

Letters for the Editor of the "Freethinker" should be addressed to 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favour by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office to any part of the world, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

Only one hundred and ten thousand pious pilgrims visited Mount Ararat in a body this year. The urbane and gentlemanly proprietors of the Ark Tavern complain that their receipts have hardly been sufficient to pay for the late improvements in this snug retreat. These gentlemen continue to keep on hand their usual assortment of choice wines, liquors, and cigars.—Opposite the Noah House, Shem Street, between Ham and Japhet.—*Dod Grile.*

Sugar Plums.

The Annual Conference of the National Secular Society was held on Sunday last at Manchester. There was a good attendance of delegates from Branches, and also of individual members. From both the Executive's Annual Report and the feeling displayed on the discussion of various matters on the Agenda, it was quite evident that the conviction of a rapid forward movement of Freethought in the immediate future was very general. The talk that went on between meetings was also evidence that most of the Branches are determined to make extra efforts in the coming lecture season to make our propaganda felt. We sincerely trust that this resolution will not be allowed to languish. The current of opinion is set in our favour, and we must make the most of it. We publish this week the Executive's Annual Report. An account of the business proceedings will appear in our next issue.

For the fourth time Mr. Cohen was elected President of the N.S.S., and he desires to take this opportunity of thanking the members of the Society for the renewed expression of their confidence. The post of President is an unpaid office, and it brings no little labour, anxiety, and responsibility. The honour lies in the service, and the reward in the satisfaction of seeing the great work go forward. The consciousness that in the election to the post of President lies the highest honour the Society can confer supplies the greatest incentive for a man to continue to give of his best. That Mr. Cohen has always given the Society, and will continue to give.

The Bowman case, which made legal beyond the possibility of question a bequest to a Secular Society, had a curious and interesting sequel in the House of Lords on June 3. Hitherto it has been held that a bequest for providing Masses for the dead was invalid. This decision was reaffirmed in the lower Court and in the Court of Appeal in the case of a recent will. On taking the case to the House of Lords, these decisions were reversed, and the gift declared valid. The Lord Chancellor remarked that it was not reasonable within a short period of time to declare valid "legacies given for the purpose of denying some of the fundamental doctrines of the Christian religion," and held that a bequest for the celebration of the "central sacrament" of Catholicism was invalid. All but one of the Judges agreed, and the verdict was given accordingly.

For our part, we welcome the decision. We have no more desire to see a form of religion penalized by the law than we have to see Freethought penalized. Opinion should be left to stand or fall by its own merits. In this connection our readers will be interested in the following from that sturdy *Christian* opponent of the Blasphemy Laws, Mr. F. VERINDER. He writes:—

DEAR MR. COHEN,—As you know, I have always advocated the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws, and have given support to the best of my ability to every effort that has made to that end during the last forty years. I have done this, not in spite of being a Churchman, but because I was a Churchman, and believed that those who held other opinions about religion were entitled to the same liberty as I was prepared to claim for myself.

But I was hardly prepared for the indirect result of your long-deferred victory in *Bowman v. the Secular Society*, which appears in this morning's law reports. I congratulate you, in the name of freedom of opinion, on the very unexpected fact that, in fighting for your own liberty, you have helped to complete the long process of (Roman) "Catholic Emancipation," see the Lord Chancellor's judgment in *Bourne and Another v. Keane* and others in to-day's *Times*. Thus liberty is justified of all her children!—Yours faithfully, F. M. VERINDER

(Sometime Hon. Sec. of the Guild of St. Matthew).

We hope that Roman Catholics will be duly grateful when they reflect that but for the Freethinker's fight for justice this decision would not have been given.

Know then thyself, presume not God to scan;
The proper study of mankind is man. —*Pope.*

N. S. S. Conference.

Executive's Annual Report.

BY THE PRESIDENT.

IF the Annual Conference had met this year merely to congratulate itself on having survived the War, that might well have justified this meeting. Fortunately, we meet under happier conditions. We can congratulate ourselves on not merely being alive, but on being healthier, with a stronger membership, more Branches, a wider influence, and a keener spirit of activity than when the War began.

When the War broke out, the Churches saw in it the promise of a great religious revival. Well, if the Churches are satisfied with the "revival," we are. Never before in the history of this country has the credit of organized religion stood so low. In the minds of thousands, the belief in God, a future life, and in the whole scheme of Christianity has gone beyond the possibility of recall. Many have paid dearly for their emancipation, but it has come. For the future they are lost to the Churches; they are converts to a more ennobling faith.

In spite of the difficulties in the way of lecturing, in the shape of increased railway fares, shortage of halls, etc., it is gratifying, too, to be able to report that the work in the lecture field has been well maintained. More than the usual number of meetings have been held, and everywhere to good—sometimes to large—audiences. The President and Mr. Lloyd have both been busy, and both report successful meetings all over the country. Mr. R. H. Rosetti, one of our "acceptable" London speakers, has just been released from the Army, and has lost no time in getting back to platform work. Mr. W. H. Thresh is a new-comer on the platform, but is winning golden opinions wherever he lectures. Messrs. Willis and Williams, of Birmingham, have also been busy in their own city and in the adjacent towns. But the Society is still suffering from a dearth of lecturers, and it is hoped that, with the release of the younger men from the Army, this difficulty will diminish.

In Belfast a new Branch of the Society has been formed, and two meetings addressed by the President in the Ulster Hall were conspicuously successful. Belfast has now a goodly number of members, an able Secretary, and an energetic Committee. We have every reason in hoping for continued good work from this quarter. The President also paid a visit to Edinburgh, a city that has been too long quiet, and held a couple of good meetings. A Branch of the Society has been formed there, and is preparing for continuous work in the autumn. The Liverpool Branch is still hampered by the difficulty of getting a suitable hall, but has held public meetings in the best available. That is certainly better than standing still. Manchester, which three years ago was in a comatose condition, has now one of the strongest Branches in the country. It carries on a vigorous propaganda, and is blessed with a Committee that is wholeheartedly devoted to the work. The prospects of Freethought in Manchester are excellent. Birmingham continues to hold its meetings in the handsome new Repertory Theatre. It is to be hoped that the Birmingham friends will receive the financial and moral support of local Freethinkers in their endeavours to maintain their propaganda under such desirable conditions.

In South Wales Freethought continues to make good progress. Our Welsh friends are very enthusiastic in the cause, and it is pleasing to note the number of young men in connection with the local Branches. A stall in the marketplace for the sale of Freethought literature has been opened by the Maesteg Branch, and in Swansea there exists a shop for the sale of our literature in the very centre of the town. This is an example one would like to see followed in other places. South Wales, which, three years ago, did not possess a single Branch of the N.S.S., has now six, and there is a prospect of more.

Although not undertaken by a Branch of the Society, mention may be made here of two day's meetings held in Leeds. There is at present no Branch of the N.S.S. in Leeds, but your President was invited by the local Freethinkers to lecture in the city. The meetings were held in the Town Hall, one of the handsomest public buildings in

the North of England. On each occasion the hall was well filled, and the experiment may be described as a complete success. It was the first time the hall had ever been let for such a purpose, and the success of the meetings was a proof of how much may be done when the attention of the public is boldly called to our propaganda.

In Scotland the work is going ahead, and an attempt is to be made to secure concerted and more successful action between the various centres. Certainly, all round the Clyde, conditions are ripe for a forward movement. Tyneside, too, is in need of more attention being paid to public meetings and general propaganda. South Shields has held some public meetings, but much more ought to be done in the district.

In London difficulties connected with the hiring of suitable halls have prevented much being done in the shape of large public meetings. The only special lectures undertaken by the Executive was a course at South Place Institute. The lecturers were Messrs. Lloyd, and Snell, and the President, and were quite successful. Locally, however, the propaganda has been well maintained. The North London Branch maintains its open-air work on Parliament Hill, and during the winter has run a series of Sunday evening discussions with satisfaction and success. The South London Branch has also held continuous indoor meetings during the winter, and conducted open-air meetings in Brockwell Park during the summer. The South London Branch is also trying another experiment by engaging Mr. T. F. Palmer as paid organizer for a period, and a grant of money has been received by them from the Secular Society, Limited, towards the expense of the work. In East London, the Bethnal Green and West Ham Branches continue their open-air work with excellent results.

Although not connected with the work of the Executive, its attention has been called to the number of Freethinkers recently elected to local bodies of larger or smaller importance. In the absence of something like a complete list a selection of names would be invidious. One may, however, mention the election of Miss Vance to the Board of Guardians of the locality in which she resides. Freethinkers who have the misfortune to need parish relief may, therefore, feel sure of having justice done them, and others will certainly not suffer from having a Freethinker on the board.

It is pleasing to record that the influx of new members continues, and that during the year new Branches have been formed at Maesteg, Belfast, Rhondda, Coventry, Tonypandy, Ognore Vale, and Edinburgh. Permission was also asked for, and given, to form a Branch at Lagos, W. Africa. Judging from reports, this Branch bids fair to prove a thorn in the side of our missionary friends.

During the year the Society has lost by death an old and esteemed Member and Vice-President in the person of Mr. H. Cowell. Mr. Cowell's interest in Freethought was life-long, and his interest in our work was maintained to the end.

The Executive also desires to take this opportunity of expressing its sympathy with all those members and friends who have experienced bereavement as a consequence of the War. The magnitude of the loss is apt to blind us to the amount of suffering involved, but each death carries its individual pain, and to each one the Executive offers its respectful sympathy.

During the War, Freethought activity on the Continent has of necessity been in abeyance. With the close of the War, we are glad to see work is being resumed. *La Pensée* has again resumed publication in Brussels, and energetic steps are being taken to reorganize the various centres of activity. A communication was received from the International Bureau, asking the opinion of the Executive as to the holding of an International Conference, one of the suggested conditions being the exclusion of any representative from Germany. Your Executive felt bound to reply that it could take no part in an International Conference from which the representative of any particular country was expressly excluded. It was felt that the principles of Freethought and the traditions of the N. S. S. forbade any other reply.

On taking a general survey of the Movement, the Executive feels justified in forming a very hopeful view of the future. On all sides the forces of organized religion are weakening

and the Churches are vocal with lamentation. Five years of war has induced a more serious note in the public mind, and the collapse of Christianity in practice has now become apparent to many thousands. A spirit of inquiry has been aroused, there is an increased demand for our literature, and it is pleasing to learn that, in spite of the unprecedented difficulties in the way of publishing, the *Freethinker* to-day enjoys a larger circulation than it did when the War began. Our immediate problem is how to take advantage of the new situation; how to enlist in the service of Freethought these thousands of emancipated minds. It will be the duty of the new Executive to take this question seriously in hand. A careful examination must be made of our resources, with a view to more efficient work. Meanwhile, the Executive would urge upon all Branches the need for a more efficient and a more vigorous propaganda. For a Branch to be content with an occasional meeting of members is not enough. It must aim at getting at the general public, and that can only be done by public meetings in suitable halls. Experience has shown that the public is there, ready, if we make the proper advances. A spirit of adventure must be cultivated. Our Movement is a great one, with great traditions. Its place, now as ever, is in the forefront of the battle. The Freethought Movement has been built up by the labour and suffering of devoted men and women. It is our pride that we have inherited these traditions, and possess something of the spirit of our forerunners. We can only make good that claim by carrying the work of mental emancipation to a successful conclusion.

A Victorian Freethinker.

It is curious that the only fairly sympathetic reference to the recent death, at the age of eighty, of the Hon. Lionel Tollemache should have been, not in the Rationalist Press, but in the broad Church paper, the *Guardian*. The clerical paragraphist believing, no doubt, in the salutary effect of economy in truth, evidently thought it wiser not to indicate the sceptical basis of Tollemache's criticism of conventional religion and ethics. Hence, while noting that he was a sort of Boswell to the men of his generation whom he admired—to Grote, Charles Austin, Gladstone, Jowett, Pattison, Goldwin Smith, and others—and admiring the peculiar aptness of his illuminative anecdotes, our clerical journalist was very careful not to direct his orthodox readers to Tollemache's best work, his *Stones of Stumbling* and *Safe Studies*, both published in 1884. In these engaging and stimulating volumes the Victorian Freethinker gave full play to his talent for acute, logical analysis of religious and ethical beliefs conveyed in a pleasantly discursive form. Although the books I have mentioned were issued for private circulation, it is not by any means difficult to meet them, either on the stalls or at the second-hand booksellers. I rescued my copies from a stall in that happy hunting-ground of your genuine, if impecunious, book-lover, Farringdon Road. I am certain that those of my readers who appreciate the Oxford manner at its best, the manner, let me say, of Mr. Asquith or Mr. E. S. P. Haynes, the true Balliol note of urbane irony, will thank me for introducing them to a logical and pleasantly cynical Freethinker. I am assuming, of course, that most of my readers have not acted on Mr. J. M. Wheeler's implied advice to the same effect in his *Biographical Dictionary*, where Tollemache has an honourable place in Victorian Freethought.

Lionel Arthur Tollemache, the second son of the first Baron Tollemache, was born on May 28, 1838. He was brought up, like most children of that period, in an atmosphere of pious evangelicalism, the corner-stone of which was the cheerful doctrine of hell fire, an "unshaken confidence in the reality of the bottomless

pit." His parents, I am certain, would have agreed with the comment of a pious evangelical on the liberalism of F. D. Maurice: "Mr. Maurice doesn't believe in eternal punishment, but *we* hope for better things." At the parish church, he tells us that he heard this hymn of ghastly thanksgiving. It was one he learnt by heart in his boyhood:—

When I hear the wicked call
On the rocks and hills to fall;
When I see them start and shrink
On the fiery deluge brink;
Then, Lord, shall I fully know,
Not till then, how much I owe.

The voice of conscience, for him, as for Ernest Pontifex, in *The Way of All Flesh*, was not a wise admonishment, rather it was the nagging and jabbering of an irritable and ill-conditioned woman. It produced a plentiful crop of prigs. But stronger minds managed in the end to escape its tyrannical oppression and suppression by a natural reaction and a salutary dose of cynicism. Tollemache went to Harrow, as Clough went to Rugby, with an unboyish interest in religion, and an unnatural delight in self-questioning. As a scholar he was a credit to the school, and went up to Oxford in 1856 as Balliol scholar. He was strong in classics and mathematics, and would have been, no doubt, a brilliant don if he had had less money and better health. As it was he remained an amused and amusing observer of the idiosyncracies of his fellow-men, and a preacher of the Arnoldian gospel of "sweetness and light." Like other Balliol men of birth and brains, he had Jowett for a friendly guide. Tollemache had not as yet worked himself out of religion, and in his conversation would put his difficulties before the Master who did not readily encourage an unlimited number of what he irreverently called "stodgy" questions. As an Anglican clergyman, Jowett was supposed to accept the doctrines of Christianity, yet when Tollemache first met him he had only one firm belief—the immortality of the soul, and even that was in the end refined away into a mere consciousness of goodness. For the majority of earnest Christians he was either a Deist or perhaps an Atheist. Imagine the horror of a pious undergraduate when the master blandly remarked that civilization owes more to Voltaire than to all the Fathers of the Church put together. His teaching and personal influence were powerful dissolvents of faith, his pupils becoming open or pragmatic unbelievers, or professing, like many Anglicans then and now, a Christianity *minus* Christ and God.

It was yet another Oxford "divine," the Rev. (or, as some would have it, the "irreverend") Mark Pattison, who further assisted Tollemache on his path from Evangelicalism to Freethought. Pattison was the best scholar at Oxford, and a pessimist by temperament, with a bias towards the philosophical attitude to Amiel. For him evolution had, to use his own words, "defecated the idea of a Deity to pure transparency." He held that the stream of tendency is towards Agnosticism, but was not inclined to agree that logically there is no difference between not knowing if there be a God and being without the idea of one. The theology of the time he wholeheartedly despised, and he had Spencer's dislike of bishops and clerical obscurantists in general. Tollemache, in an amusing passage of his *Recollections of Pattison* (1891) tells us that Drummond's *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*—

which had a "mad success" with old maids, clergymen, and homœopathic doctors, was sent to him, perhaps in order to convert him. Not relishing the author's naive attempt to keep the newest wine in cracked bottles, and also to found on the wholesale immorality of natural forces analogies such as might more consistently

be used to defend the religion of Juggernaut than the religion of Jesus,

he contemptuously threw the book aside. It needed, perhaps, no great courage to dispose of such flimsy, rhetorical rubbish; it needed more to admit that "Pantheism is the only form of Theism which can be reconciled with evolution." And what is more, he refused to believe that the world is tending towards a harmony between fact and human desire; which, I suppose, is what is meant by "progress." Pattison, indeed, was much more outspoken than Jowett, even in print, and seems to have felt more keenly the charge of hypocritical opportunism brought against him by less intelligent, if sincerer, Christians. Subtle reasons for staying where they were did not quite silence the voice of conscience in these pragmatical Oxford dons, who undoubtedly helped to broaden the minds of the young men they took in hand. But I am afraid their example was hardly a direct encouragement of a disinterested love of truth.

Tollemache's emancipation from slavery to narrow-minded religious orthodoxy began when he went to Oxford. The new conception of things came to him easily, as if Freethought with him had been long a potential factor. It was strengthened and developed later by his contact with powerful minds that had rejected Christianity with scorn. The man who perhaps influenced him most was Charles Austin, a great parliamentary lawyer, a link between Bentham and Jowett. In early life Austin was like Grote, the historian, a "rigid Atheist," and his uncompromising attitude to religion helped to counteract the teaching and example of Jowett. It was under this influence that Tollemache wrote the essays brought together in the two volumes I have recommended. The smaller one, *Stones of Stumbling*, so named because the essays were calculated to cause the orthodox to stumble, contains four essays. A partly persuasive, partly logical plea for the lethal treatment of incurables—physical, of course, not mental incurables—a sort of legalized suicide by proxy. An essay on "The Fear of Death," one on "Fearless Deaths," and another on the "Divine Economy of Truth," which had first seen the light in the *Fortnightly* under the more provocative title of "Hell and the Divine Veracity." It is a penetrating discussion of the notion of the Greek Fathers that in revelation the Deity gives not the whole truth, but just as much as the chosen are able to assimilate. It is not difficult to understand that the question of the veracity of God was not one which the Anglican clergy wanted to raise. The larger volume, *Safe Studies*, was, in spite of its title, nearly as inflammable. The best essays are "Tennyson's Social Philosophy," "Physical and Moral Courage," "Charles Austin," and "Literary Egotism." The judgments, ethical, religious, and literary, are as sound as they are witty and malicious. In illustrating the varieties of moral courage, Tollemache asks if it is necessarily laudable. For instance, the courage of Lady Macbeth was atrociously immoral. But yet you cannot refuse the name of moral courage to those whose "faith unfaithful keeps them falsely true."

It was this dubious kind of courage (he says) which Xenophanes disclaimed, when charged with cowardice for refusing to gamble: "Yes," he said, "I am the greatest coward in the world, for I dare not do what is wrong." It may be instructive to remark that this cowardice was in no wise the failing of a late dignitary of the Church, who was nicknamed "Presence of Mind," in consequence of a story told by himself. "A friend," he used to relate, "invited me to go out with him on the water. The sky was threatening, and I declined. At length he succeeded in persuading me, and we embarked. A squall came on, the boat lurched, and my

friend fell overboard. Twice he sank, and twice he rose to the surface. He placed his hands on the prow, and endeavoured to clumb in. There was great apprehension lest he should upset the boat. Providentially, I had brought my umbrella with me. I had the presence of mind to strike him two or three hard blows over the knuckles. He let go his hold and sank. The boat righted itself, and we were saved.

GEO. UNDERWOOD.

The Fortune-Tellers.

A DISTINCTION has clearly to be drawn between the bellicose religions and the pacific philosophies. Jehovah, the Deity of Christians, is *par excellence* the God of Battles. To incite man to battle for a "faith," that faith had to be represented by a fetish. The same thing holds good now. A mere code of ethics is, according to the Church Militant, not sufficient. You must postulate something supernatural—and therefore unnatural and unknown to Nature—that will stir the emotions and fire the passions, even though reason is blinded.

Two outstanding qualities of the Christian Deity are established beyond controversy: (1) his jealousy and (2) his love of praise. "I your God (Jehovah) am a jealous God. *I* brought you up out of the Land of Egypt. *I* delivered you by my wonderful works among the heathen. Thou shalt worship none beside *me*. If thou goest after other gods *I*, the great *I am*, will forsake thee; leave thee desolate, helpless, bankrupt. Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live."

These were (among others) astute priestly commands and inhibitions calculated to suit savage ignorance. They have nothing in common with the tolerant and humane maxims of sublime thinkers like Confucius or King Asoka or Antoninus. We revert to those great ones when we hear some cheap, cacophonous, Chestertonian sneer about "advanced modern thinkers." It is really the Chestertonian ambition to be thought "new." The peaceful and humane philosophies leave no room for a jealous, praise-greedy, tyrannical, war-waging God, or for fortune-tellers. Their teachings embrace all men of all nations, the pivot of them all being consideration for others; or, as that noble Russian, Kropotkin, has described it—and illustrated it by many beautiful examples taken from the animal world—mutual aid.

Newspaper outbursts against fortune-telling seem to us to be largely evidence of the recrudescence of the ancient savagery contained in the heartless and vindictive order, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." Gods are made by an anthropomorphic process; and the nature of the God of a particular time is determined by the nature of the men of the time who make him. The cause of the orthodox frenzy of denunciation of fortune-tellers is the fear of competition. Granted that some of those who patronize fortune-tellers are influenced to do so by superstition, can the clergy show that it is anything other than superstition that induces the most ardent believer to seek *their* ministrations? Mental weakness, mental disease, fear, ignorance—all are characteristic of the superstitious. You find the most earnest and most superstitious people in lunatic asylums, and sometimes on thrones. In one newspaper we see fortune-tellers condemned as people who adopt "devious" and "dishonest" ways of making a livelihood. "The objection to the fortune-teller," this sapient organ tells us, "is that he (or she) is a swank—swanks publicly and receives money for deceit.....but they are being routed out.....jail is the only thing to put an end to the game."

Is not this getting rather melodramatic about a comparatively trifling thing, particularly when the paper agrees that many of those who go to have their fortunes told do so "just for the fun of the thing"? Really there are more formidable evils created by war than the appearance of a few more fortune-tellers, even though we, as Freethinkers, recognize that it is a proof that we have still the primitive mind in our midst, just as the continued existence of priests and parsons is proof of the same thing. Why, even in peace time, no village fair was complete without its gipsy's tent where lads and lasses crossed the wise crone's palm with silver, and had their horoscope cast! The War is surely getting too much on the nerves of the orthodox, who, it appears, would willingly close all places of entertainment for body or mind. The gipsy fortune-teller, like Aunt Sally, Punch and Judy, the swings, and the roundabouts, serves to add to the gaiety of nations! But, according to the clerical rule, any joy that is not "holy," *i.e.*, not communicated through ecclesiastical channels, is damnable. And that's an end on't!

A fortune-teller is one who, simply considered, makes predictions about the future as affecting his patrons. What else is any clergyman? Many a clergyman is not so original, for he has a stock of predictions ready made to be served out to all and sundry. The *Book of Baxter the Prophet*, is, perhaps, a closed book; but Baxter has successors, though they do not take the risks that he did to create a temporary sensation. Prophet Baxter said he would see the end of the world before he shuffled off this mortal coil, but he did not. Angels don't defend us nowadays, or celestial cavalry, or unbombed crucifixes. Yet there are apparently some people at large who believe that they do, and they try to make others believe it also. We have been told that a newly born child in Ireland lately uttered a prophecy about that country, and the appearance of a gifted Irish black pig has set the editors by the ears. It is sad no doubt, but no sadder than the credulity with which many people swallow and assimilate the bunkum ladled out to them week by week from many a pulpit. And they will go on swallowing and assimilating until Knowledge comes into her kingdom, and that hoary tyrant Belief is finally tumbled from his throne into the dust.

Religious faith depends for its existence upon force, fraud, and farce. We could cite passage after passage from the Holy Bible to prove this. But once you convince men, and conviction is only possible through knowledge and active reason, that Jehovah is a powerless mumbo-jumbo after all, his day will have ended, and his jealousy and love of adulation will be only subjects for jesting. But the uninformed mind will continue to fear what is *unknown* and *believed* to be powerful.

When all is said and done, will not the combined efforts of richly endowed, state-protected, ecclesiastical fortune-tellers to crush out of life a handful of insignificant imitators seem in the future to be rather contemptible?

IGNOTUS.

A Story and a Moral.

WHEN I was alive the last time Bully Bottom lived, and Puck was playing his antics on Titania under the orders of his Lord Oberon. I remember a wood, not a bit like our modern ones, but thicker and much greener. It was almost in the summer, at that indefinable time between the seasons. There was a road by the wood and little streams in it, running through glades which were all the more open when one came out of the trees. Everything was so dark among the trees, but the sun and moon shone in the trivial open spaces.

Dreadful deeds were seen sometimes by the fays when the moon was out, and they were near the road. Once one saw a battle, with the clash of swords and armour, and fearful trampling of horses, but it was not afraid. The fighters were men and horses, and the fairies always despised the men; they were only sorry for the poor horses. Men were so silly the fairies thought. They were so big that they could not hide in a buttercup, and they never seemed to laugh, only to roar in a wild outlandish way. Then they liked to kill each other, and no fairy was so cruel as that.

Queen Mab certainly did not love Puck, but, then, who did? He was so mischievous. One never knew what he was going to do, so had to be careful. In the tranquil depths of the wood were other things she loved though. Bluebells, violets, and cowslips, and the yellow primrose. Huge antlered deer and gentle fawns.

Those fays hated the destructive wolf, but were charmed when they found the slough cast from a snake. It was such a good place to hide in. The others spent hours looking for one, and when they found him how they all laughed and danced fairy rings round and round.

But now the wood is gone. Horrid houses are in its place. The hills are cobbled and shops stand on them. Sometimes there is a church to which no one ever goes, and passed by with a glance from these so busy men. In the churchyard lie the bones of other busy men.

The road which used to lie so quietly by the wood, and was not straight and very flat, is both these things now, and it is noisy. In place of the pools round which the careful horsemen went, and where the fairies bathed on warm evenings, it is all wood pavement. Not very good pavement either, and that is how the last of the fays came to be killed.

He had lived in the churchyard, running rings round the tombstones on cool evenings. His brothers and sisters were all dying. They said life was too hard. No green grass! No quiet! There were horrid things rushing about like the men they used to know. All made of iron, and rattling. Only the men they used to know rode horses, and when they were not on the horses, they could hardly walk. Iron rattled with each step.

Now the men sat on high beams of wood and iron, and rattled along the road without any horses. Much faster too! It was worse than the dreadful battle, for they did not stop at all; only went on and on, through day and night. They made worse noises than the hunters, and killed people with their new animals. They killed fairies too. Oberon died under one of them, and one day the last fay saw his sister crushed under a huge rolling wheel. She tried to cling on and be merry, but it turned round so quickly that she was crushed to death.

Only one night did the last fay live alone. He could not dance although the stars shone brightly, and there was no one on whom he could play tricks, so he died of sadness and solitude.

I wrote this story in a spirit of pure phantasy, and absolutely without perception of its connotations, but awhile since, when looking over various of my compositions, I saw that the story meant more than a moment's mysticism.

It is a commonplace that machinery and progress have killed off the fairy—that, in sooth, imagination has been destroyed by mechanical device; and now that there is so great an inquiry for quantity production, it is not amiss to look a little more closely at the legend.

Imagining of the spirit is invariably the reverie of satisfied leisure contemplating Nature, and only man-

work upon natural processes is capable of lending those times of leisure when the spirit may wander. Not so is it with those lost in the damnation of repetition work—some small-part, mechanical process, innumerable repeated, with no soul satiation in the finished and completed product; so that gradually have those delectable little people drawn farther apart, until there is no more a space for them to inhabit, with the consequence of their expiration.

G. E. FUSSELL.

N. S. S. Conference.

Public Meeting.

THE N. S. S. concluded its Conference at Manchester on Sunday last with the usual public meeting.

A large and highly appreciative audience assembled in the Palladium, Peter Street, and for about two-and-a-half hours was held spellbound by the reasoned oratory of the President (Mr. Cohen), Messrs. A. B. Moss, J. T. Lloyd, R. Rosetti, F. Willis, and Mrs. Bayfield. The speeches were excellent as stimulus and thought-food. It can be safely said that no one went empty away. Mr. Cohen struck the keynote of the gathering by stating they were there to testify to the faith that was in them. His references to his illustrious predecessors—Bradlaugh and Foote—evoked a rousing cheer. He compared the Freethought position of to-day with that of the days of Thomas Paine, pointing out that there was not a clergyman of any standing in the modern pulpit who differed essentially from the teachings of the *Age of Reason*. In reviewing various aspects of the War and militarism, Mr. Cohen conclusively proved the uselessness of Christianity as a civilizing force—proved, in fact, that through the ages, as at the present, it was the great obstacle to progress.

Mr. A. B. Moss, the veteran, was in excellent form. In referring to some of the reported miracles of Jesus, he said that the feeding of the multitude could with great benefit have been repeated often during the War, and the restoration of sight was now needed by thousands of blinded soldiers. Mr. Moss' exposition of Secularism as the philosophy of this world was a piece of excellent reasoning, excellently delivered.

The next speaker, Mr. R. H. Rosetti, fresh from the War, was chiefly interesting in his references to the clergy, who were not often found, he declared, in what were called "the warm corners" on the front. The Army could not be described correctly as religious or anti-religious. The wave of religious enthusiasm amongst the troops was a myth.

Mr. J. T. Lloyd followed with an attack on supernaturalism, which, he said, was rooted in ignorance. The speaker then pointed out that the first work of the Freethinker—his destructive activities—was in order to clear the ground. Every system of thought—religious or otherwise—was destructive of something. Secularism teaches we are to make the most and the best of the life that now is, whereas Christianity concerns itself supremely with an imaginary other life. Mr. Lloyd closed with Ingersoll's words: "The object of life is to be happy; the place to be happy is here; the time to be happy is now; the way to be happy is to make others happy."

Mr. F. E. Willis explained that religion was, after all, a geographical accident, that the religion of the country in which a person was born would, in all likelihood, be that person's religion. In touching upon current topics, the speaker said that under Secularism war would be impossible, one of that system's principles being "Mankind are my brethren."

Mr. Monck then made a brief appeal "as a recruiting serjeant" to sympathizers to join the local Branch.

As Mr. Cohen rose to close the meeting a voice in the auditorium cried: "Let's hear the lady!"—the lady on the stage was Mrs. Bayfield. The request was eagerly supported by the audience, and Mrs. Bayfield in a beautiful and forceful impromptu speech dealt with Freethought from the woman's point of view.

The President then informed the meeting that the end had arrived. He had been hard at work since 10 a.m. His closing speech was an admirable mixture of philosophy and humour, and dealt with the subject of relics, chiefly religious. In expressing his pleasure at seeing such a large number of ladies in the audience, he caused much amusement by describing Eve as "a side issue"; and in a reference to Miss Maude Royden and the Bishop of London, the ecclesiastic, said Mr. Cohen, compared with her, had "a brain like a mollusc."

L.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday and be marked "Lecture Notice" if sent on postcard.

LONDON.

INDOOR.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street E.C.): 11, Laurence Housman, "Stern Justice."

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Band Stand): 6.15, Mr. Jas. Marshall, A Lecture.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill Fields): 3.15, Mr. E. Burke, A Lecture.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): Miss K. B. Kough, 3.15, A Lecture; 6, A Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford, E.): 7, Mr. E. Burke, A Lecture.

HYDE PARK: 11.30, Mr. Shaller; 3.15, Messrs. Saphin, Baker, Kells, and Dales.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

LEEDS SECULAR SOCIETY (19 Lowerhead Row, Youngman's Rooms): Members meet every Sunday at 5.45 (afternoon). Lectures in Victoria Square at 7.15.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S.—Ramble to Hazel Grove and Bramhall. Meet Piccadilly, Mosley Street corner, 10 o'clock.

PROPAGANDIST LEAFLETS. New Issue. 1. *Christianity a Stupendous Failure*, J. T. Lloyd; 2. *Bible and Tectotalism*, J. M. Wheeler; 3. *Principles of Secularism*, C. Watts; 4. *Where Are Your Hospitals?* R. Ingersoll; 5. *Because the Bible Tells Me So*, W. P. Ball; 6. *Why Be Good?* G. W. Foote; 7. *The Massacre of the Innocents (God and the Air-Raid)*, Chapman Cohen. *The Parson's Creed*. Often the means of arresting attention and making new members. Price 15 per hundred, post free 1s. 2d. Samples on receipt of stamped addressed envelope.—N. S. S. SECRETARY, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C. 4.

PRINTING.

Under Healthy Conditions, Trade Union Hours and Rates of Pay.

Send me a Trial Order. Estimates for any Class of Work.

Quality and Value my Working Motto.

W. H. HEARSON,

Printer,

UTTOXETER.

PIONEER LEAFLETS.

By CHAPMAN COHEN.

- No. 1. What Will You Put in Its Place?
- No. 2. What is the Use of the Clergy?
- No. 3. Dying Freethinkers.
- No. 4. The Beliefs of Unbelievers.
- No. 5. Are Christians Inferior to Freethinkers?
- No. 6. Does Man Desire God?

Price 1s. 6d. per 100.
(Postage 3d.)

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C. 4

Pamphlets.

By G. W. FOOTE.

- MY RESURRECTION. Price 1d., postage ½d.
 CHRISTIANITY AND PROGRESS. Price 2d., postage 1d.
 THE MOTHER OF GOD. With Preface. Price 2d.,
 postage 1d.
 THE PHILOSOPHY OF SECULARISM. Price 2d.,
 postage ½d.

THE JEWISH LIFE OF CHRIST. Being the Sepher
 Toldoth Jeshu, or Book of the Generation of Jesus.
 With an Historical Preface and Voluminous Notes.
 By G. W. FOOTE and J. M. WHEELER. Price 6d.,
 postage 1d.

By CHAPMAN COHEN.

- DEITY AND DESIGN. Price 1d., postage ½d.
 WAR AND CIVILIZATION. Price 1d., postage ½d.
 RELIGION AND THE CHILD. Price 1d., postage ½d.
 GOD AND MAN: An Essay in Common Sense and Natural
 Morality. Price 3d., postage ½d.
 CHRISTIANITY AND SLAVERY: With a Chapter on
 Christianity and the Labour Movement. Price 1s.,
 postage 1½d.

By J. T. LLOYD.

PRAYER: ITS ORIGIN, HISTORY, AND FUTILITY.
 Price 2d., postage 1d.

By WALTER MANN.

PAGAN AND CHRISTIAN MORALITY. Price 2d.,
 postage ½d.

By MIMNERMUS.

FREETHOUGHT AND LITERATURE. Price 1d., post-
 age ½d.

Pamphlets.—continued.

By T. F. PALMER.

THE STORY OF THE EVOLUTION OF LIFE.
 Price 2d., postage 1d.

By A. MILLAR.

THE ROBES OF PAN: And Other Prose Fantasies.
 Price 1s., postage 1½d.

By H. G. FARMER.

HERESY IN ART. The Religious Opinions of Famous
 Artists and Musicians. Price 3d., postage ½d.

By COLONEL INGERSOLL.

IS SUICIDE A SIN? AND LAST WORDS ON
 SUICIDE. Price 1d., postage 1d.

LIVE TOPICS. Price 1d., postage ½d.

LIMITS OF TOLERATION. Price 1d., postage 1d.

CREEDS AND SPIRITUALITY. Price 1d., postage ½d.

FOUNDATIONS OF FAITH. Price 2d., postage 1d.

THE GHOSTS. Price 2d., postage ½d.

By D. HUME.

ESSAY ON SUICIDE. Price 1d., postage ½d.

MORTALITY OF SOUL. Price 1d., postage ½d.

LIBERTY AND NECESSITY. Price 1d., postage 1d.

*About 1d in the 1s. should be added on all Foreign and
 Colonial Orders.*

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C. 4.

NOW PUBLISHED.

Humanitarian Cosmopolitan Peace AGAINST Mammonite National Wars.

BY

JOACHIM KASPARY.*(The Friend of all Mankind.)*

Price 6d., post free 6½d.

**The Guide of Life and the Ethics of Humanitarian Deism
 compared with those of Christianity and Buddhism.**

Price for Poor People 2s., post free.

Price for Rich People 21s., post free.

The Science of Reincarnation, or The Eternity of the Soul.

Price 10s. 6d. nett, post free.

If any of the above published Works cannot be obtained through Newspaper Agents or Booksellers, please
 order direct, enclosing Stamps or Postal Orders, from

J. KASPARY & CO.,

Sole Selling Agents for the British Empire and U.S.A. for The Humanitarian Publishing Society, Ltd.,
 58 City Road, London, E.C. 1.

More Facts for Fighters.

JUST PUBLISHED.

WOMAN AND CHRISTIANITY.

The Subjection and Exploitation of a Sex.

BY
CHAPMAN COHEN.

CONTENTS:

Chapter I.—Christianity and Morality. Chapter II.—Woman and Primitive Religious Beliefs. Chapter III.—Woman in Pre-Christian Civilization. Chapter IV.—Woman and the Bible. Chapter V.—Woman Under Christianity. Chapter VI.—Christianity and the Home. Chapter VII.—Madonna-Worship and Chivalry. Chapter VIII.—Religion and Woman.

A Companion Volume to the Author's *Christianity and Slavery*. A Work that neither Christians nor Freethinkers should miss reading.

Price One Shilling. Postage 1½d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C. 4.

Population Question and Birth-Control.

POST FREE THREE HALFPENCE

MALTHUSIAN LEAGUE,
48 BROADWAY, WESTMINSTER, S.W.

A New Work on Immortality. To be read by all.

SCIENCE AND THE SOUL.

With a Chapter on Infidel Death-Beds.

BY
WALTER MANN.

An examination of the attitude of Science, Religion, and Freethought towards death and a future life.

A handy Reference Work for Freethinkers, and an enlightening one for Christians.

Price Sevenpence. Postage 1½d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C. 4.

A Freethought Classic.

Voltaire's Philosophical Dictionary.

(Selected Articles Unabridged.)

Volume I, 128 pp., with Fine Cover Portrait and Preface by CHAPMAN COHEN.

The *Philosophical Dictionary* represents, perhaps, the most characteristic of Voltaire's works. It contains some of his deadliest writings against the Christian superstition; and, reading its pages, one can understand why the name of Voltaire roused so much hatred with the "friends of the night." No English version of the *Dictionary* is at present obtainable. The present edition aims at reproducing all those articles of interest to Freethinkers, and will be completed in three or four volumes.

Price 1s. 3d. Postage 1½d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C. 4.

(OVER 3,500,000 SOLD)

FAMOUS CHEAP REPRINTS.

EACH 1s. NET. (except Nos. 17, 23, 27, 32, 49, and 42), BY POST 1s. 2½d. Ten post paid to any inland address for 10s. 9½d.

1. HUXLEY'S LECTURES AND ESSAYS.
2. THE PIONEERS OF EVOLUTION. By E. CLODD.
3. MODERN SCIENCE AND MODERN THOUGHT. By SAMUEL LAING With Illustrations.
4. LITERATURE AND DOGMA. By M. ARNOLD.
5. HAECKEL'S RIDDLE OF THE UNIVERSE.
6. EDUCATION: Intellectual, Moral, and Physical. By HERBERT SPENCER.
7. THE EVOLUTION OF THE IDEA OF GOD. By GRANT ALLEN.
8. HUMAN ORIGINS. By SAMUEL LAING.
9. SERVICE OF MAN. By J. COTTER MORISON.
10. TYNDALL'S LECTURES AND ESSAYS.
11. THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES. By C. DARWIN.
12. EMERSON'S ADDRESSES AND ESSAYS.
13. ON LIBERTY. By JOHN STUART MILL.
14. THE STORY OF CREATION. By E. CLODD.
15. AN AGNOSTIC'S APOLOGY. By Sir L. STEPHEN.
16. LIFE OF JESUS. By ERNEST RENAN.
17. A MODERN ZOROASTRIAN. (Out of print)
18. AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF HERBERT SPENCER. By Professor W. H. HUDSON.
19. THREE ESSAYS ON RELIGION. By J. S. MILL.
20. CREED OF CHRISTENDOM. By W. R. GREG.
21. THE APOSTLES. By ERNEST RENAN.
22. PROBLEMS OF THE FUTURE. By S. LAING.
23. THE WONDERS OF LIFE. By ERNST HAECKEL.
24. JESUS OF NAZARETH. By EDWARD CLODD.
25. GOD AND THE BIBLE. By MATTHEW ARNOLD.
- 26 and 27. THE EVOLUTION OF MAN. By ERNST HAECKEL. (Now 2s. 6d. net paper, 4s. net cloth)
28. HUME'S ESSAYS: I.—An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding. II.—An Inquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals.
29. HERBERT SPENCER'S ESSAYS. (A Selection.)
30. EASY OUTLINE OF EVOLUTION. By DENNIS HIRD.
31. PHASES OF FAITH. By F. W. NEWMAN.
32. ASIATIC STUDIES. By Sir A. C. LYALL (Out of print)
33. MAN'S PLACE IN NATURE. By T. H. HUXLEY
34. THE ORIGINS OF RELIGION. By A. LANG
35. HUXLEY'S TWELVE LECTURES AND ESSAYS
36. HAECKEL: His Life and Work. By W. BOLSCHEK.
- 37, 38, and 39. LIFE OF THOMAS PAINE. By MONCURE D. CONWAY
40. HAND OF GOD. By GRANT ALLEN. (Out of print.)
41. THE NATURE AND ORIGIN OF LIVING MATTER. By H. CHABLTON BASTIAN.
42. LAST WORDS ON EVOLUTION. By ERNST HAECKEL. (Now issued only in crown 8vo at 3d. net.)
43. PAGANISM AND CHRISTIANITY. By J. A. FARRER.
- 44 and 45. HISTORY OF RATIONALISM. By W. E. H. LECKY.
46. HUXLEY'S APHORISMS AND REFLECTIONS.
- 47 and 48. HISTORY OF EUROPEAN MORALS. By W. E. H. LECKY.
49. SELECTED WORKS OF VOLTAIRE.
50. KINGDOM OF MAN. By Sir RAY LANKESTER.
51. TWELVE YEARS IN A MONASTERY. By J. McCABE.
52. LECTURES AND ESSAYS. By Prof. W. K. CLIFFORD.

VARIOUS.

- THE DARKNESS, THE DAWN, AND THE DAY. By KERIDON.
MAN *versus* THE STATE. By HERBERT SPENCER.
SOCIAL STATICS. By HERBERT SPENCER.
J. S. MILL'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY. (Unabridged.)
THE CHURCHES AND MODERN THOUGHT. By P. VIVIAN.
*INGERSOLL'S LECTURES AND ESSAYS. Three Series. 160 pp. each.
THE LEGEND OF CHRIST. By Professor VIROLLEAUD.
DO WE BELIEVE? A Brief Exposition of the Rationalist Faith. By J. A. HEDDERWICK.
- WAR AND THE CHURCHES. By JOSEPH McCABE.
WOMEN IN POLITICAL EVOLUTION. By JOSEPH McCABE.
SELECTED PROSE WORKS OF SHELLEY.
†THE AGE OF REASON. By THOMAS PAINE.
†THE RIGHTS OF MAN. By THOMAS PAINE.
†PAINE'S POLITICAL WRITINGS. (A Selection)
PENALTIES UPON OPINION. By HYPATIA BRADLAUGH BONNER.
THE RELIGION OF THE OPEN MIND. By ADAM GOWANS WHYTE.

* Each part published in paper cover at 1s. net, or the three series in cloth gilt at 6s. net.
† 1s. net paper, or in cloth (with other vols. of Paine's Works) for 6s. net.

Complete Catalogue and Copy of "Literary Guide" (16 large pages) free on receipt of post-card.

LONDON: WATTS & CO., 17 JOHNSON'S COURT, FLEET STREET, E.C.4.